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**THE WHITE HOUSE**

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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The President's Trip to Europe and Russia

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Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice on the President's Trip to Europe and Russia

The James S. Brady Briefing Room

4:40 P.M. EDT

DR. RICE: Good afternoon. All right. I want to talk briefly about why the President is making this trip, and then highlight the key events. And then I'll be happy to take your questions.

Last year, the President spoke in Warsaw of his vision for a Europe, whole, free and at peace, in which Russia finds its place. On this trip, the President will talk to our Europe friends about the major progress we've made toward that goal. He will reaffirm the transatlantic alliance, and advance its adaptation to meet post-9/11 challenges.

He will consult with some of our oldest friends and most important allies. And the President will help usher in a new relationship between the United States and Russia, based on increasingly common interests and mutual trust. He will advance that relationship with President Putin by signing an historic treaty that codifies the most dramatic strategic arms reductions in history, and by launching the NATO-Russia Council in Italy, along with his NATO counterparts. And that council can usher in a new era of cooperation between Russia, the United States and Europe.

The President will leave for Europe Wednesday morning. His first stop will be Berlin, where, Wednesday evening, he will meet Chancellor Schroeder. Later the President will be joined by Mrs. Bush, who, as you all know, has been in Europe since May 13th, and who will accompany the President for the remainder of the trip.

Thursday morning, the President and Mrs. Bush will be guests of President and First Lady of Germany, Mr. Johannes Rau and Mrs. Christina Rau and Bellevue Palace. The President and Mrs. Bush will then be welcomed by Chancellor Schroeder, and the President and the Chancellor will hold a bilateral meeting to discuss Germany's cooperation and assistance in the war on terror, NATO-Russian cooperation, and bilateral issues. The meeting will be followed by a working lunch, and the lunch will be followed by a joint press availability.

Thursday afternoon, President Bush will address a special session of the German Bundestag. He will outline his vision of a Europe, whole, free and at peace, and discuss Europe's and the United States' hard work and joint success in realizing the vision as we approach the NATO summit in Prague. The President looks forward

to conveying this historic message from the united capital of a united Germany, at the heart of a uniting Europe.

Later Thursday afternoon, President and Mrs. Bush will depart for Moscow. He will first meet one-on-one with President Putin, and later hold an expanded bilateral meeting with President Putin. After the bilateral meeting, the two Presidents will sign an historic treaty reducing U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces by roughly two-thirds over 10 years. This agreement, which is a mere three pages long, and took only six months to negotiate, signifies that the vestiges of the Cold War are behind the two countries, and sets the stage for a new era of cooperation and friendship.

After the signing ceremony, the two Presidents will hold a joint press availability. Following the press availability, President and Mrs. Putin will host President and Mrs. Bush for lunch at the Kremlin.

Friday afternoon, President and Mrs. Bush will take a walking tour of the Kremlin and Cathedral Square. After the tour, they will meet the leaders of community groups, religious groups, and non-governmental organizations. That evening, President and Mrs. Putin will host President and Mrs. Bush for dinner at the Putin's residence in Moscow.

Saturday morning, President and Mrs. Bush will depart Moscow for St. Petersburg. The two Presidents will proceed to St. Petersburg University, where they will each make remarks and jointly take questions from students. This appearance will be broadcast on Russian television.

Sunday morning, the President and Mrs. Bush will visit the Kazan Cathedral and the Choral Synagogue, giving them the chance to witness firsthand the right to freedom of worship, which is now thriving in Russia.

After arriving in France, President Bush will meet one-on-one with President Chirac, followed by an expanded bilateral meeting. The two Presidents will talk about French cooperation in the war on terror, the need to upgrade NATO capabilities, and the importance of continuing to bring Russia West. The two Presidents will hold a joint news conference, and later that evening will host -- will hold a working dinner.

On Monday morning, Memorial Day, the President and Mrs. Bush will travel to Normandy, where they will attend a service at the St. Marie Eglise. After the service, they will tour the American cemetery at Normandy, where they will also lay a wreath, and the Presidents will make remarks.

Monday night, the President and Mrs. Bush will depart Normandy for Rome. And that evening, the President will hold a bilateral meeting and working dinner with Prime Minister Berlusconi. They will discuss the NATO-Russia summit, the war on terror, and bilateral issues.

On Tuesday, the President will call on the President of Italy, President Chiampi, before proceeding to the summit, where he will hold a bilateral meeting with NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson. At the summit, the President and his colleagues will sign the NATO-Russia agreement. After the summit, the President will meet with the Holy Father, before leaving Rome for Washington.

Happy to take your questions.

Q Other than the arms treaty, what other agreements do you expect to be signed in Moscow?

DR. RICE: Well, there will be a number of statements that talk about the various broad aspects of the relationship. There will be a joint political statement that puts in context this new era in U.S.-Russia relations. There will be a statement on economic relations, a statement on relationships between citizens. We expect a counterterrorism statement. There are a number of others that are being discussed. But these are all representative of the working agenda that the United States and Russia are going to pursue over the next several years.

And I should just mention that one of the important issues that they will deal with are non-proliferation issues as a part of the bilateral agenda.

Q Russia has said that it would -- this cap on oil exports. Will there be any talk of the United States purchasing Russian oil?

DR. RICE: I think we will talk about energy cooperation, but I don't know whether they will talk about specifics. You know, oil is really a commodity, it's not really purchased country to country. It's purchased on world markets. And I assume that that would continue to be the case.

Q Jumping ahead, do you suspect the meeting with the Pope that there will be any mention of the controversy here with the priests?

DR. RICE: We will talk about whatever the Holy Father would like to talk about. And the President's view, of course, is that this is a matter for the Catholic Church, the clergy, Catholics worldwide to resolve.

Q He won't bring it up, himself?

DR. RICE: I don't think he will.

Q Will the President speak with President Putin at all about the increasing steps toward democracy in Russia vis-a-vis more freedom of the press, human rights, et cetera, et cetera?

DR. RICE: Yes. And in two ways. First of all, there will be a meeting with non-governmental groups, members of the business community, civic society. The President also has begun with the Russians something called a media dialogue, which looks at the problems that confront a free press in an emerging economy and a transitional state like Russia. And he believes that this both gives some concrete support to the thought of free media through talking about, for instance, economic arrangements that might actually support the free press, how laws might be put in place to protect the free press from unwanted government interference.

But, yes, they talk about the free press, and the President is trying to pursue an agenda that might actually help the free press, as well.

Q When you mention that the President's Germany speech is going to talk about the post-9/11 challenges and the changing relationship, can you give us, if not -- some sort of preview or at least thematically, what kinds of things he may be talking about?

DR. RICE: Well, quite clearly the President is going to lay out the hopeful future that we and our transatlantic allies, and now with a growing relationship with Russia, that that hopeful future for bringing others into the community of democratic, market-oriented states. In that context, he also notes that there are some threats to the values and to the stability that makes that possible. And terrorism is among those.

He will talk about the importance of the kinds of activities we've had -- intelligence-sharing, law enforcement activities, freezing terrorists' financing -- but also call on all of our allies, and in fact, when we go to NATO we'll talk more about NATO itself beginning to look at capabilities that might help in the fight against terrorism.

The fact is that after 9/11, when NATO declared that an attack on one is an attack on all, in Article 5, that was a very real step and a real realization of exactly what the President's is going to be saying.

Now, it took some adaptation, even on the part of the American Armed Forces, to figure out how to fight a war in this terrorist haven, marrying up horses with 21st century air power. It also took a while to integrate NATO forces into that effort. But when you look at it, member states of NATO, not as NATO qua-NATO, but

member states of NATO, now play an increasingly important role in the coalition's efforts -- the Danes, the Germans, the British, the French. And you would like, the next time around, just like the United States is making a transformation of its own capabilities, to be able to deal with the next time that we have to deal with a terrorist safe haven, for NATO to have the same kind of conversation. And I think the President will press that agenda.

Q On the war on terror, coincidentally, can you boil down why you think, based on changes that have been made, the administration is now, after 9/11, in a better position to connect the dots of a particular terror scheme, in a way that it was not able to do, perhaps, before 9/11?

DR. RICE: David, as you might imagine, we have given this a lot of thought. And there's been a lot of examination of how to achieve better intelligence fusion between domestic and foreign intelligence, how to make sure that information is getting shared with the appropriate agencies. The fact is that we can never be certain that we -- we can be certain that we will likely be target of an attack again. We're still vulnerable. That's why it is important to keep assessing the threats. That's also why it's important for the American people to be vigilant. That's why it's important to have the threat alert system that we have.

But from the very top, the fact that the FBI Director, the CIA Director, the President, the Vice President, Tom Ridge and I sit there together to look at the threat situation, to talk about what to do, the fact that there is an Office of Homeland Security now that can really pay attention to what the domestic agencies are doing in response, the fact that there are new airport security measures that are being put in place -- I might say, you know, airport security measures that have been looked at for a long time, but really kind of gained acceleration after 9/11 -- port security, border security, broader intelligence worldwide network to try and bring to bear liaison services and what they know -- there are a lot of activities.

But it will not just stop there. I think that both Bob Mueller and George Tenet have talked about important organizational changes that they want to make and need to make to make certain that the right kind of analysis is done of intelligence information, so that we know when something is actionable.

Q Dr. Rice, once again India and Pakistan are at the brink of war. This issue comes during the two Presidents' meetings in Moscow. What do you think they are going to discuss, or what they are going to tell India and Pakistan?

DR. RICE: Well, I might note, the Russians have been helpful in some of the diplomacy in South Asia. During the high -- period of heightened threat and concern after Christmas and in January, the Russian Foreign Minister was also active. President Putin was also active. And it is an example of how cooperation between Russia and the United States can help in some of these regional crises that we face from time to time.

Let me just say that there is a lot of active diplomacy on the India-Pakistan front. We take the assurances and the commitments that President Musharraf made to -- not just to the President, but in an open speech, that they would end activity across the line of control from the territory of Pakistan, that they would deal with the infrastructure of terrorists, and we take those quite seriously, expect them to be fulfilled.

We expect the Indian government to recognize that war will help no one here, that neither side, Pakistan nor India is going to benefit from war. And we recognize the statesmanlike stance that India has taken in recent months, starting with the attack on the Indian Parliament. And the President had a chance to communicate that to Prime Minister Vajpayee just a few days ago.

Q Can you tell us, Condi, on the non-proliferation element that you mentioned, what does the President plan to say about Russia's activities with Iran? And also, what, if anything, about Russia's activities in South Asia?

DR. RICE: The President intends to talk a lot about the Russian-Iranian relationship. It's been a problem for several years. We intend to keep pressing that agenda. We also want to talk about weapons of mass

destruction, their control, controlling the materials so that biological, chemical, nuclear leakage doesn't happen. I mean, there's a big agenda there.

Q Is that going to be the subject of a further agreement? Is it going to be the subject of further --

DR. RICE: I think the way to think of it, David, is that in the context of a relationship that has gotten much stronger in the underlying notion of cooperative, common security threats, we need to now put non-proliferation in that context. This is not saying to the Russians, you've been doing these bad things -- stop. The reason that we and the Russians need to address these kinds of activities, is that as the President said, weapons of mass destruction are a -- one of the two big threats to stability; the other being terrorism.

We've made a lot of progress with the Russians on the counterterrorism mission. We're going to try to make progress on the non-proliferation front. I will say we've had -- Spence Abraham has had more effective discussions with his counterpart in recent months. And that gives us some hope that we might be able to address these issues in a different way.

Q If I could, back on terrorism for a moment. The concerns that you and the Vice President expressed over this weekend, is it the same kind of information, the same generality, the same lack of specificity that we had last summer? And did the administration feel obligated to share I guess what you would say our your fears of because of the flap last weekend about you knowing something that you didn't tell everyone about?

DR. RICE: No, Jim, the President said all the way back just a few days, frankly, after 9/11 that when he knew information he would share it with the American people. And you have to recognize that we have more in the way of sheer volume of information now. We have detainees in custody. we have a kind of worldwide mobilization of the intelligence network, so we're just getting a lot more information. And some of it may be sheer volume. But we also understand better through some of the systems that are in place, like the threat alert system, that there are different kinds of information that need to be communicated differently.

When we had information that, though it was general, was at least specific to financial institutions, we communicated that to law enforcement and they were able to act on that. When we had information that was specific as to a place, we have gotten in touch with the law enforcement officials of that place and said, look, it's a general mention, but it is a mention. You have to always judge the credibility of any such information. You, frankly, get a lot of information that on the second day doesn't look nearly as credible as it looked on the first day. You need to take the time to make that assessment.

We also believe, as the President and the Vice President and others have done several times since 9/11, that we need to keep reminding the American people of our vulnerability. Sunday was not the first time in this period since 9/11 that the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, myself, have talked about vulnerabilities. And we will continue to do that because we believe that the American people are among best and most important early-warning system as the -- or the people are, as they turned out to be on that American Airlines flight.

Q But the nature of the information was --

DR. RICE: The nature of the information is still pretty general. And it is, again -- you know, it's a little difficult to judge -- is it volume, is it we've got more sources. But we are on a higher state of alert now than we were on 9/11. There is a lot more going on in terms of port security, border security, airport security. So it would be wrong to take this period and say, all right, if the information looks the same as it did in 9/11, what does that say you should do. We're on a higher state of alert than we were on 9/11, but we assess it every day and we're going to continue to assess it every day. And when there is more specific information, if it is credible, it will be passed along.

Q And my question from Miami.

DR. RICE: Oh, yes, there is a remote from Miami. So, who's there? Hello?

Q No questions from Miami. (Laughter.)

DR. RICE: Okay. (Laughter.) Yes.

Q What is the strategic value -- each side may be going down to two-thirds, but still is going to have 2,000 or so nuclear warheads which are not going to be destroyed, but simply going into storage. So, from your point of view, what is the value of this agreement?

DR. RICE: Well, I think that when you have far fewer operationally-deployed warheads it does say something about the readiness of the forces. Even if they're stored or they're someplace else not on launchers.

Let me just remind everybody, and it's a point that, frankly, we've had trouble getting across, so let me just say it again -- there is no arms control treaty in the history of the relationship between the United States and Russia that destroyed warheads. Always the reductions were achieved either by retiring platforms, by converting platforms to other uses, by storing warheads, or by dismantling them. Right? Now, some or all of that is going to happen, and some will be stored as spares.

There is an asymmetry; the Russians are continuing to make warheads -- for good reasons. I mean, it's not an accusation, for good reasons. We essentially don't do that, so there's some asymmetry. But your point is a really good one, and it's a little bit like the point we kept making about the ABM Treaty. What keeps Russia and the United States from going to war today is not the number of nuclear weapons that they have on either side, or the antiballistic missile treaty, or some outdated notion of strategic stability. It's that they have nothing to go to war about.

And in 1972, when the entire arms control regime really took off, you were dealing with two implacably hostile enemies. The only thing they agreed about was they didn't want to annihilate one another because it meant committing suicide. So you needed highly articulated arms control treaties that the two sides could be confident that the interaction of their forces was not going to cause them to go to war.

You had Soviet forces deep into the heart of Europe that looked like they were on a hair-trigger to attack Europe. With Poland in NATO, with Germany unified, with Russia about to sign an historic "at 20" agreement with NATO, you're right, it is not this arms reduction treaty that brings stability; it's the political relationship. And the treaty is, therefore, more emblematic of the underlying political relationship than the other way around. That said, it's a good thing to do. And I think everybody feels better with more numbers in the world than higher.

Q Can you confirm, is Director Tenet expected to go back to the Mideast this week?

DR. RICE: We're still talking about the timing of where George goes and when. He is committed to pulling together the parties, site to be determined, when it looks like he can make progress on the restructuring of the Palestinian security forces. But there's no fixed date yet, John.

Q Does this week look positive?

DR. RICE: I can't really answer that. There's no fixed date. But I think he'll either go the region, or he'll meet them someplace relatively soon.

Q I haven't really heard you say anything about trade, and yet you have real problems with the Europeans on the farm bill, on steel. I'm wondering, does the President intend to bring those issues up in any forums, and if so --

DR. RICE: Oh, I'm sure they'll come up. I don't have any doubt about that. Look, we have over \$2 trillion -- nearly \$2 trillion in trade with the Europeans, and a small amount of that trade is at dispute here. Trade disputes, trade difficulties are not new in any relationship. We -- the President believes that the steel decision that he made was in accordance both with U.S. law and consistent with WTO, and that he did it because he has to enforce America's trade laws. And if he doesn't do that, he will never maintain the consensus around free trade. And so he did what he did, for very good reason.

There is a mechanism to deal with disputes. And that's why we're all members of the WTO. That's why there are WTO panels. And what we've been saying is, if there is a dispute, let's do that. Let's take it to the WTO panel. Let's not engage in high-wire accusations here. Let's just resolve it in the way we have to resolve it. And so I think the President will also talk about that. But let's always remember that this is a small portion of what is a huge relationship in economic terms with Europe.

Q Dr. Rice, we've been given to understand there will be pretty substantial demonstrations in Germany. I know you say the alliance is -- the transatlantic alliance is as close as ever. To what extent do you worry that the people of Europe and America might be drifting apart?

DR. RICE: I don't worry that the people of Europe and America are drifting apart. I think that, first of all, the right to express yourself is not just known in Europe. We have demonstrations in the United States that don't like American policy. So why shouldn't we have them in Europe that don't like American policy?

I think the important thing here is that we are very strong allies, and for one reason -- we share common values. And the common agenda that we have now is to take this period of extraordinary success in the spread of those values into places that nobody really ever thought those values had a chance -- even in the transition that Russia is going through, in Latin America, in parts of Africa -- and to take this extraordinary success, and to bring as many people and countries and leaders on board that platform of democratic values as we possibly can. That's the historic chance.

And if we are too focused on what divides us, which is mostly policy debates, or some small percentage of our trade, then we are going to miss this extraordinary opportunity. What we expect to be talking about is how the G-8 will help with the African development projects; how the Millennium Challenge Account that the President put out, the increases in American foreign assistance that are there also in Europe, can spread this so that -- spread this wealth so that poverty begins to recede and people have hope.

We have work to do together in the Middle East, to reform the character of the Palestinian Authority and to try to bring peace to the Middle East. There's a huge positive agenda there. And if we argue once in a while, and if people don't like policies once in a while, I don't think that's the headline. I think the headline is completing this extraordinary project.

Q What do you say to the substance of the demonstrators who say America is increasingly riding roughshod over its European allies, whether it's trade, global warming, axis of evil, things like that?

DR. RICE: Well, first of all, the axis of evil was not aimed at Europe. It was aimed at three states, plus their friends, who, shall we say, don't have the best interests of either the United States or Europe at heart. And whether or not Europeans liked the way the President said it, it is very hard to argue with the logic that states that repress their own people, try to acquire weapons of mass destruction and are not transparent, and have demonstrated their willingness to violate and to completely shove aside all international norms, those states are a danger. That's unassailable. And so I think whatever one wants to say about the phrase, axis of evil, or the Europeans may want to say about it, the underlying argument here is pretty powerful.

When it comes to Kyoto, yes, we disagreed on this particular treaty. We share the goal of doing something about global climate change. The President has put out his own plan for that.

And I would just remind people that even after we were viciously attacked on 9/11, the United States did not, in a caricature fashion, go shooting off cruise missiles against whatever happened to be available. We were deliberate, we took our time. The coalition was put together. We had been attacked and attacked viciously. But the President took his time to put this coalition together. And it has held. And this is a President who speaks clearly, speaks firmly, acts decisively, but also acts deliberately. And I think the Europeans can be assured.

Q Does the administration consider Cuba to be part of the axis of evil?

DR. RICE: Well, look, the Cubans -- let's just say, what the Cubans are is badly out of step with everybody else in the hemisphere. And whatever club you would like to put them in, it's a club that not too many people belong to any longer. The Cuban people deserve better. And what the President tried to do today was to lay out a way forward that would allow smaller steps in Cuba, including steps that we require and ask of every other country in the world -- free elections, economic freedoms to begin to come to the Cuban people -- to change the nature of the relationship. It is -- it's obvious, when you go the Organization of American States that there is a Cuban flag there, but nobody in the Cuban chair.

Q Back to the steel trade issue. The European Union will now be joined by Japan and many other countries in imposing high tariffs on imports from the United States in retaliation for American tariffs, as decided by the President in March. Is the President now concerned about triggering a global trade war with his decision in March to protect the domestic steel industry? They have only a month -- less than a month to settle the issue before the Europeans and Japanese will impose tariffs.

DR. RICE: Well, the President's view is and has remained since he met with members of the European Union here just six weeks ago or so that we have a mechanism for resolving trade disputes, it's the WTO. This ought to be settled in the WTO. And he'll continue to press the case that it is the WTO that is the proper forum for the resolution of this dispute.

Q -- which usually take time, much longer than the month you have now.

DR. RICE: Well, I think that everybody should just step back, and we should remember that we have a global trading system in place, and that it provides for resolution of disputes. And after all, since we believe that the steel decision was WTO compliant, there is every reason that we should go to the WTO.

Q I'd like to ask you a little bit about the new direction in our relationship with Russia. You had talked about the treaty being leaving the old vestiges, the last vestiges of the Cold War. But then you also talked about how weapons of mass destruction are really important to this President, as well as the war on terrorism. And I'm wondering, is our relationship still mostly concentrating in the security realm, or are we taking a drastic turn and moving to some other issues?

DR. RICE: It's a very important question, because I think we're all hopeful that this is actually the last time that an arms reduction treaty gets quite the attention that this one has gotten; that really what this should be is the new relationship means a normal relationship.

Now, because of the large military complex of Russia and the legacy of the Soviet Union, there is still a lot of work to do on the non-proliferation front. I mean, Russia is a big player in -- on the non-proliferation front. So it's not surprising that that would be a part of a forward-looking agenda with Russia. I think we would hope to have a new attitude about non-proliferation, that we face a common threat from WMD, and that we should talk about how each of us can contribute to dealing with the proliferation problem of states that are concerning us.

Counterterrorism is a big agenda item with every country in the world right now for us. I mean, it is with our friends, Germany and France, just as it is with Russia. And so that's also not surprising. But this is an increasingly broad relationship. I mentioned the media dialogue. There's a business dialogue. We're going to celebrate the relations among citizens. We're going to celebrate the fact that we have a lot of regional

cooperation around the world. It's kind of a little known fact that even though it's not come to fruition, for instance, the United States, Russia and France have a very good collaboration to try to bring a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh situation.

So we have a lot going on to bring about peace and stability. We expect the economic relations to grow dramatically as Russia is making better choices about the nature of its economy. But with any normal relationship, a lot of this will no longer be in the government sphere. And I can tell you from my own experience teaching at Stanford, just the number of Russian students who are not here on official exchanges any longer, they've simply managed to get themselves into school in the United States. I think you'll see more of that. There are an increasing number

of Russians who work in -- may remain Russian citizens, but work in American businesses. And you're going to see a lot more of that, too. Not everything will be government-to-government.

Q Dr. Rice, following up on speaking clearly and acting decisively, is the President going to raise Iraq?

DR. RICE: The President and President Putin will undoubtedly talk about Iraq. I think we have one incredibly important step forward, in that we and the Russians agreed on the goods review list, along with the other members of the Perm 5. That's a very important step forward in changing the nature of the sanctions, making them more robust, but at the same time, having less effect on the Iraqi people. And, yes, we'll talk about Iraq. But again, since the President hasn't made any decisions on what to do about the status quo in Iraq, just that the status quo is unacceptable, I think he will want to consult with Putin on exactly that point.

Q Dr. Rice, will there be any discussions in President Bush's meeting with President Putin about missile defense cooperation? And is this one of the items that possibly there will be some kind of a statement of intent coming out of the --

DR. RICE: Well, we will see if there is a statement. But I think they will talk about missile defense cooperation, and they may even talk about -- you know, as a part of a non-proliferation agenda, as part of dealing with the threats of mass destruction, it's a natural issue.

Q On the issue of proliferation the Iran, you said the President won't go in and make demands and tell the President of Russia to stop. But what specific behavior troubles you that Russia is doing? And what explicit --

DR. RICE: I didn't say he won't say, "stop." He will say, stop. Let me be very clear; he will say stop.

Q What will the "stop" be about?

DR. RICE: Well, we all know that the Russians are now engaged in the construction of nuclear power plants in Iran, that there are concerns about how those power plants might be diverted to other uses. It is the case that there are a number of other issues that we have and want to raise with the Russians about what their cooperation might look like with Iran. We also have raised from time to time conventional arms transfers of a certain character and of a certain sophistication with Iranians, because some of the things the Iranians are trying to acquire could only be aimed at American forces.

And so we will talk about that. I think we will also want to talk about what the Iranians are doing in terms of support of terrorism in the Middle East -- Hezbollah -- and to try to elicit Russian help and support for trying to shut down those activities.

Q In December 2000, you described Russia as a threat to the West in general, and to the European allies in particular. I was wondering to what extent the change and the improvement since then is being driven by your own changing views about the relationship with Russia, and to what extent it's changes in the genuine situation.

DR. RICE: I believe what I said was that Russia's non-proliferation behavior was a threat to the West, in general, and a threat to the world, more specifically. And it still is. And what is different, though, is that we have a context now in which I think we have broader cooperation on a variety of issues, and we can now try to deal with this non-proliferation problem anew.

I can't promise you that we're going to get there. It's a hard issue. We don't see the issue identically. We have to start to come to some common understanding of how to deal with the non-proliferation problem.

But let's give credit to the Russians here, as well. The Russians have made a different choice in the last years to begin to turn their orientation toward integration into Europe, integration into the international economy, integration into the West. They have made clear that WTO accession is important to them. They have made numerous changes to their economic life at home that makes it look like a different Russia from the point of view of investment and potential trading partner. They have been a stalwart asset and friend in the war on terrorism in intelligence cooperation. They saw -- Putin saw early that an American presence of the kind that we have, not a permanent, but an American presence in Central Asia to prosecute the war was not a threat to Russian interests, but rather helpful to Russian interest. All the way to the arming and equipping and training of Georgian forces to fight in the Pankisi Gorge.

A lot has happened in this relationship in a very short period of time. The President, I think in Ljubjana, determined to see if it was possible to have a different kind of relationship with the Russians. If you remember, there were those who, after the March expulsion of counter-intelligence agents, said that this would be the start of a new Cold War. The President was determined that that was old business and it was time to move forward. I remember very well that he told Putin, let's not be Nixon and Brezhnev, let's be Bush and Putin, and make history ourselves. And the combination of the President's openness and determination to try to do that, and I think of Putin's strategic decision that his country's interests lay in this direction, is an historic moment. And both Presidents are to be congratulated for having seen that possibility.

Last question.

Q Dr. Rice, is it the case that the President will be visiting an American war cemetery in Normandy? And if so, is that in any sense intended as a reminder to America's allies of the sacrifices that Americans made on their behalf in the past? In the context of keeping together the coalition against terror, which, you say is still intact, but obviously needs shoring up.

DR. RICE: Well, the President will be in Europe on an important American holiday, Memorial Day, and it is important to honor those who fought and died for our freedom. And of course, American Presidents, wherever they are -- and they usually are in the United States on that day -- go and honor America's war dead in that way.

This is a unique opportunity to remind all of us of how hard we fought together to defend freedom against tyranny in World War II. It reminds us that there are still threats to freedom, both from weapons of mass destruction and from terrorism. And it reminds us that what binds us as allies is our common beliefs and our common values and our willingness to defend them. And it reminds not us -- not just us, but also our European allies, and it's gotten more expression since 9/11 in the way that our European allies have taken on that challenge.

Thank you very much.

Q Have a good trip.

DR. RICE: Thank you. Thank you.

END 5:18 P.M. EDT

